



[François-Dominique Toussaint, 1743 - 1803](#)

Toussaint L'Ouverture

Toussaint L'Ouverture – “Toussaint the Opening” – was the leader, both military and civilian, of the slave revolt in the French West Indian colony of “Saint Domingue”, which is now the Republic of Haiti.

Toussaint brought his country to the brink of independence. The constitution of which he was the author (download linked below), though not yet the constitution of an independent republic, was enough to lead to his capture, transportation to France, and death in captivity two years after its publication.

Toussaint's successor, [Dessalines](#), did achieve independence, though on harsh terms that crippled the country with “[reparations](#)” to the French Republic - one of the great scandals of history.

[C L R James](#) wrote a famous work about the Haitian revolution, calling the book “[The Black Jacobins](#)”. The title was a reference to the bourgeois take-over of the Great French Revolution that had taken place a few years earlier, the “Terror” under Robespierre, and the eventual bourgeois dictatorship that was the consequence of the French revolution, and therefore by extension, also the Haitian revolution.

In other words, the freed slaves became subordinated to a dictatorship of “their own” black bourgeoisie, of which Toussaint was one of the first. This was hardly surprising, and practically inevitable. The first dictatorship of the proletariat, the Paris Commune, was not seen until seventy years later, in 1871.

Even if a “Jacobin”, Toussaint was still an “Opening” in history, and one of the greatest of them all. Haiti was the first black colony to gain independence, and this was nearly one and a half centuries prior to the main wave of colonial independence that began following the anti-fascist war of 1939-1945.

The attached Haiti Constitution of 1801 is the best representation we have of Toussaint L’Ouverture’s writing.

- The above serves to introduce the original reading-text: [Toussaint, Haiti Constitution of 1801](#)
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).